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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 001019

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STATE FOR AF/W-EPLUMB, PARIS FOR RKANEDA, LONDON FOR RBELL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [IV](#)

SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: PM SPOKESMAN OPTIMISTIC, BUT  
CHALLENGES REMAIN

REF: A) ABIDJAN 995 B) SEPTEMBER 27 EIRIZ-PLUMB

E-MAIL C) ABIDJAN 1006

Classified By: Political/Economic Section Chief Silvia Eiriz for reason  
s 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary. Alain Lobognon, Spokesman for the Prime Minister, told Emboffs on October 2 that Interior Minister Desire Tagro is trying to stall the "audiences foraines" (tribunals that will issue birth certificates to those who never had them) process. According to Lobognon, the delay in the return of the administration to the North and West is due to a lack of will rather than to a lack of funding. Lobognon said President Gbagbo wants to hold elections soon and Prime Minister Soro does not object as long as identity cards have been issued. Lobognon confirmed reports of arrests by the Forces Nouvelles (FN) of persons suspected of planning a revolt, but explained that they are FN soldiers rather than civilians and denied allegations that they have been tortured. End Summary.

OPA Implementation  
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12. (C) Lobognon told Emboffs on October 2 that he is optimistic about the peace process. He stated that Prime Minister Guillaume Soro will meet with Young Patriots leader Ble Goude (who is on the UN sanctions list) October 2 and will attend a "flame of peace" ceremony organized by the Young Patriots on October 6 in Gagnoa. Lobognon noted that such meetings could never have taken place before the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) was signed. Lobognon observed that UN sanctions have "changed" Ble Goude and that the Prime Minister agreed to meet with him because Goude needs to be encouraged when he wants to discuss peace.

13. (C) Despite this optimism, Lobognon believes some members of the government are actively hindering progress. He accused Interior Minister Desire Tagro, who is a member of the President's Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) party, of doing everything he can to stall the "audiences foraines" process (See Ref A). Lobognon said the OPA provides for the Integrated Command Center to provide security for the audiences foraines and that the national police and gendarmes have been tasked to carry out the ICC's mandate, but that Tagro has ordered the sub-prefects to stay away from their field assignments, severely undercutting the fledgling identification process. Lobognon told Poloffs he believes Tagro will call for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) to be completed before the audiences foraines move forward.

14. (C) In response to a question by Emboffs, Lobognon said the delay in the return of the administration to the north and west is due to a lack of will rather than to a lack of funding. Lobognon said the Prime Minister has told the FN that they are responsible for ensuring the safety of bureaucrats in the North and West. Lobognon said the funding which has been allocated for the return of the administration is not being used to rehabilitate infrastructure as it should. (Note: EU funding is being used to rehabilitate public offices in the North. Lobognon implied strongly that some Ivorian state funds allocated for this purpose are being diverted.) In a subtle dig at FN Minister of Solidarity and War Victims Louis Andre Dacoury Tabley, Lobognon criticized Tabley's call for purchasing supplies like soap and rice for those citizens returning to their homes in the North rather than actual help with home rehabilitation. Lobognon said the Prime Minister may create a working group to address the issue. Lobognon also noted that the government should help citizens returning to the North and West who have lost their homes to looting and the ravages of nature by setting up an Emergency Plan for Reconstruction.

#### Elections

15. (C) According to Lobognon, President Laurent Gbagbo wants elections to be held as quickly as possible and Soro does not object to holding elections so long as identity cards have been issued. Lobognon told Emboffs the Prime Minister will convene an identification working group meeting within the month.

#### Arrest of IB Followers

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16. (C) Emboffs met on September 27 with Ibrahim Coulibaly's (aka IB or Major IB) "Chief of Cabinet" Ben Rassoul Timite and with National Secretary Bakayoko Broyard and President for Youth Bambu Bouake of the Union Nationale des Ivoiriens du Renouveau (UNIR), the political party founded by IB to gain legitimacy and become a player in national events (See Ref B). They told Emboffs that 7 of IB's supporters were arrested in territory controlled by the FN and that they were still in FN custody and had been tortured to get them to say that Coulibaly is planning to carry out a coup d'etat.

7 (C) Lobognon confirmed the arrests to Emboffs on October 2. He explained that the persons arrested were all military members of the FN who had been arrested in Dadane and transferred to Bouake, where they are currently being held in a military prison. Lobognon said they are being disciplined according to FN military rules, but admitted that they were arrested because the FN identified them as being involved in plans to carry out a revolt in the west. Lobognon denied that they had ever been beaten or tortured. Lobognon admitted that the FN faces a dilemma in that they clearly cannot detain people for any length of time, nor do they have the means to try people outside of the nation's judicial system.

18. (C) Comment: Lobognon told Emboffs that he will attend a meeting in Oslo on October 6 organized by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. Lobognon's comments about attempts by persons in Gbagbo's camp to derail the OPA echo the observations made to the DCM on September 27 by Boureima Badini, Special Representative of the OPA Facilitator (See Ref C). End Comment.  
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